My dear Maria

Rome 18 Novr. 1869

Caroline tells me that you like to get a letter from me so I have taken a larger sheet to write you a "long yarn" bit by bit as I can steal time for now my busy time begins in people by hundreds bringing me letters of introduction & of course I am obliged to show some attention to every one & this with my many other duties "bothers my gig" as we used to say. Carrie gave a tolerable good account of you which I could understand was not good at all but I am glad to be able to assure you that on Jan.y 2d I shall really have £10 for you & I hope that poor dear Tom will be well enough to get it, for Carrie gave me but a poor account of him. What the deuce 'tis old age has taken due possession of us all!! however I am glad to tell you I know it will comfort you that I am picking up wonderfully & am able to go out to dinner & my brilliant uniform is being now opened & prepared so that at the approaching

ceremonies I may make a figure as Her Majesty's representative — How you'd laugh if you saw me in full dress with my sword & cocked hat & my dress all covered with silver lace down to my feet — I don't know myself a bit & often think that I have mistaken myself for somebody else, for somebody else I certainly am & not the poor Joe your brother — But how wonderful! that such a change was in my destiny & in which I should excell — How you'd laugh when I tell you that just now I am striving to establish the "London baths & washhouses" in Rome at two pence a head & I am succeeding for yes & the Prince Borghese told me that to this purpose he is ready with money & time for it will be a real blessing to Rome & prevent the ague to which the Romans are subject

Also I am trying to set up a little dandyism, for my Eleanor complains that I go too shabby but I answer "Look at my two secretaries how splendid in dress & manners — so that I have no chance of showing off the master Consul but by being shabby

A sad accident to my excellent woman servant she was lighting me down my gigantic staircase & carrying my cloak when she fell head foremost from 3 steps & dislocated her left shoulder & may be laid up for months — She was rather watching if there were any thieves on the staircase for I live in such an immense palace that it seems

near 1/2 a mile long & I know that there are more than 500 people living in it — I had been at 4 nice musical parties during the month & the Italian company would accompany me home even up to my door each time. On the 5th time this favour they showed me both Ladies & gentlemen I would not allow & so wished them good night at the street door (as they as many a London house) when lo! on entering my house at the foot of the staircase (for the great doors are always open) 3 suspicious looking fellows were in waiting & so I attempted a gallant spring up stairs when I heard a quick foot step following me up I went quicker than ever, inclined to find that I could still go it — When I arrived I got behind my 1st door which is always open & I saw a man following me — he looked in & proceeded to take something from his pocket which I expected was a pistol when lo! 'twas only a key & he was my next door neighbour — so that the rogues must have been startled at me so quickly entering after me — after I got the Governor to let me have a guard every night from 9 to 11 & also I have my manservant always to come for me wherever I may be so now I am secure — The affair did me good for I discover that 'tis only nervousness that affects me & not rheumatism as in the excitement I was able to run up the stairs like a lamplighter, & I slept all night soundly on the consolation of my discovery & have been improving ever since — Carrie tells me that Tom's

what care it has cost me, what privation to raise
so large a sum as a thousand pounds, but already
pays me £50 a year & his thought it will in made
pay £100 - 'tis a great load off my mind

Every Friday ev.g I receive the Archaeological Society
some 150 persons - last night was the Colosseum I let
my Saloon at £24 a year -

Now I am longing for new years day when all my
cares will have a wind up & I shall balance accounts
for I am still in debt to my banker £30 for the Mercian

My illness has caused me an indolent life & has
increased my bulk sadly, really I must now give up
all idea of dandyism! my cloaths have to be let out

On the 7th is my birth day, you'll have this I hope
in time to drink my health & I'll think of you all

49 years ago I cracked a joke, which I'll repeat
"Here am I writing with my window open & my roses
blowing, whereas no doubt you have nothing but your bellows
blowing" - a fortnight since I put some convolvulus seeds
in a pot to creep up some dead sticks & lo my delight
they are not only creeping up but are actually in flower!
at my windows over the great fountain of Trevi

Now I hope my dear Tom that this may find you
"well got about" as I am & as we resemble each other
I will even think so, until I have the delight of a
letter from you all about yourself & your dear ones
Here's a long yarn about nothing - Your loving Joe
Enclosed is order for £25 - £10 for Maria & £15 for Eleanor

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